

College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
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EDIBLE FLOWERS

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Flowers have traditionally been used in many types of cooking: European, Asian, East Indian, Victorian English, and Middle Eastern. Early American settlers also used flowers as food. Today, there is a renewed interest in edible flowers for their taste, color, and fragrance. Edible flowers can be used fresh as a garnish or as an integral part of a dish, such as a salad. Squash flowers can be fried in light batter or cornmeal. Some flowers can be stuffed or used in stir-fry dishes. Edible flowers can be candied; frozen in ice cubes and added to beverages; made into jellies and jams; used to make teas or wines; or minced and added to cheese spreads, herbal butters, pancakes, crepes, and waffles. Many flowers can be used to make vinegars for cooking, marinades, or dressings for salad. Herbal flowers normally have the same flavor as their leaves, with the exceptions of chamomile and lavender blossoms, where the flavor is usually more subtle.

Cautions

Not all flowers are edible: some may taste bad; and some are poisonous. Eat flowers only if you are certain they are edible. Consult a good reference book. An extensive list of poisonous plants can be found at the following Web site: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/poison/poison.htm>. A flower is not necessarily edible because it is served with food. A partial list of edible flowers can be found in Table 1. The flowers of most culinary herbs are safe to use.

Additional flowers that have been reported to be edible include: Black locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia*; Cattails, *Typha* spp.; Clary sage, *Salvia sclarea*; Common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*; Coriander, *Coriander sarivum*; Fuchsia, *Fushia x hybrida*; Gardenia, *Gardenia jasminoides*; Garlic, *Allium sativum*; Garlic chives, *Allium tuberosum*; Gladiolus, *Gladiolus hortulanus*; Hyssop, *Hyssopus officinalis*; Leek, *Allium porrum*; Lemon, *Citrus limon*; Marjoram, *Origanum vulgare*; Marsh mallow, *Althaea officinalis*; Mustard, *Brassica* spp.; Nodding onion, *Allium cernuum*; Peony, *Paeonia lactiflora*; Orange, *Citrus sinensis*; Oregano, *Origanum vulgare*; Pineapple guava, *Acca sellowiana*; Plum, *Prunus* spp.; Radish, *Raphanus sativus*; Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*; Rose of Sharon, *Hibiscus syriacus*; Safflower, *Carthamus tinctorius*; Spiderwort, *Tradescantia virginia*; Strawberry, *Fragaria ananassa*; Water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*; Water lily, *Nymphaea odorata*; Winter savory, *Satureja montana*; Yucca, *Yucca* spp.

Pesticides for use on fruits and vegetables have undergone extensive testing to determine the waiting period between treatment and harvest and potential residuals on food. Pesticides used on flowers and ornamentals have not been evaluated to determine their safety on food crops. Do not eat flowers from

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